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ABSTRACT

The document presents 35 supplementary activities on American politics. The activities are designed to be used by social studies classroom teachers in elementary and junior high schools. Topics include voting, elections, presidential qualifications, presidential activities, congressional duties, political participation, term of office, political terminology, candidates and issues, party affiliation, and political heroes. Students are involved in a variety of activities, many of which stress reading and writing skills. Activities include creating bulletin board and scrapbook displays of newspaper articles, drawing voter timelines, inventing games around political themes, writing letters to congressmen and political party headquarters, composing essays, summarizing information gained from classroom speakers, making flash cards which define political terms, describing the background of various Presidents, and writing research papers. For each activity, information is given on the background of the topic, materials and procedures, and additional learning activities. (Author/DB)

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PEOPLE, PARTIES & POLITICS

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for
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SOCIO 343

KEY ISSUES

If this were an election year, what would the key campaign issues most likely be? Use a series of newspaper articles to support your choices. Display your work in some way - - - - poster, mural, collage, scroll, or booklet form.

BE A COLLECTOR

Begin collecting and organizing in some way a series of newspaper headlines, ads, photographs, and articles that deal with some political theme - - - - - females in politics, hot political issues of the moment, political heroes from the South, or problems in politics of the 20th century. Use these to make some type of scrapbook and presentation to the class.

VOTER TIMELINE

Make a time line of important dates and brief explanations of events and people in the history of voting. Add illustrations to your work.

CREATE A GAME

Pretend you are campaigning for a big political office. What issues might be important in each of the 50 states? Do some research to find out key industries, agricultural products, natural resources, and geographical features for each state. Then use these as a basis for planning a game or quiz.

EXAMPLE: Which one of the three issues below might be the most important to talk about when campaigning in the state of - - - - (Alabama).

Offering farmers higher prices for wheat products.
Offering farmers higher prices for dairy products.
Offering farmers higher prices for cotton.

BE AN INFORMER . . .

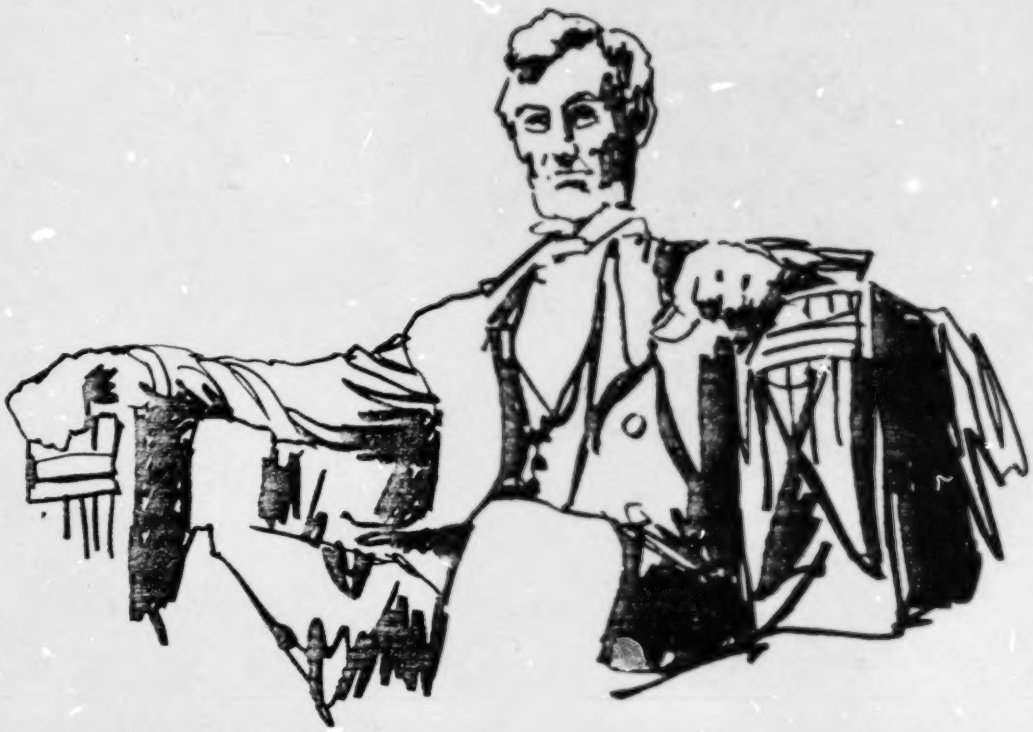
Write a letter to one of the addresses below requesting information and material on a political topic of interest to you. Use this information as a basis for developing an unusual bulletin board for your classroom.

Democratic National Committee
2600 Virginia Avenue
Washington, D.C.

Republican National Committee
310 First Street
Washington, D.C.

IF I WERE PRESIDENT

Tell America what to do! Elect yourself President of the United States and write your Inaugural Address telling America all about the things you will do as President.



BY INVITATION ONLY

Invite a local politician or member of a local citizens' political group to speak to your class (one like the League of Women Voters). Make the arrangements for the visit, prepare a list of good questions to ask your guest, develop a handout of information to give to the class on the topic or resource person invited, and write a follow-up summary of the information gained from the speaker.

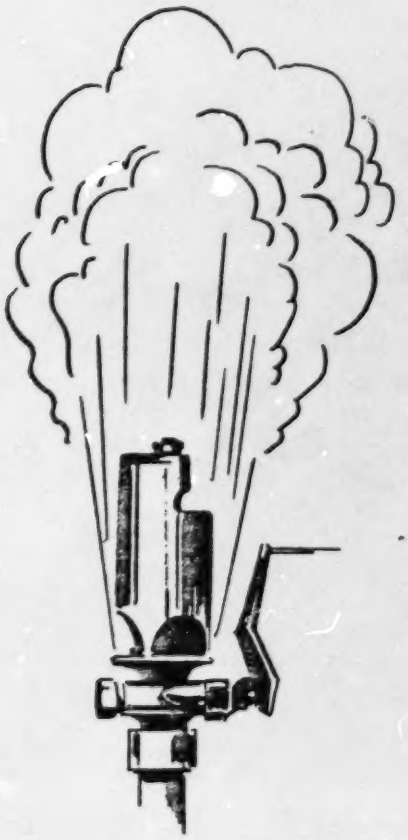
INFORM YOUR PARENTS

Use a school, local, state, or national election for developing some type of simple Voter's Handbook to distribute to others in your household and neighborhood. Include answers and comments on the five W's and How about election candidates, procedures, and issues.

LET YOURSELF BE HEARD

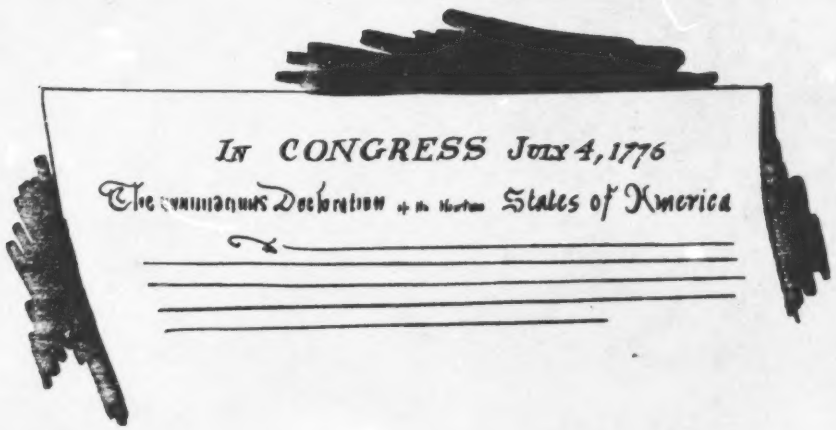
Set up a panel discussion to explore one of the following topics:

The Job of President Is Too Big For One Person
Politicians Are Not All Bad
It Is Time For a Female President
The 18-Year Old Vote Is a Good Thing



HOW WOULD YOU DO IT?

Pretend you are a political candidate today for an important office. Outline a plan aimed at getting the 18-year-old vote. What would you do? Where would you go? What promises would you make? How would you get them to the polls? What image would you want to project? What things would you avoid? What changes would you want in the Constitution?

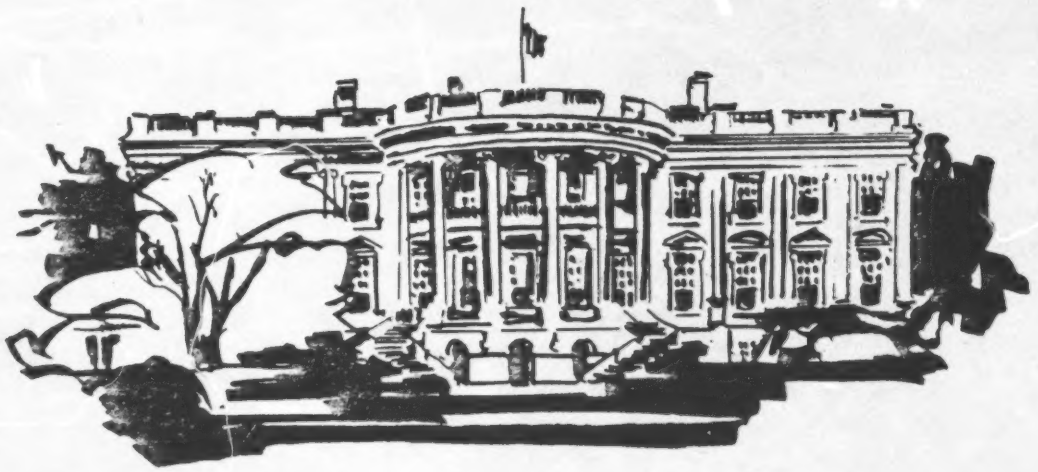


POLITICAL CONCENTRATION

Make a series of matching flash cards - - - - some with special election, political, or government terms on them and the others with corresponding definitions. Use these to play Concentration.

THE PATH TO THE PRESIDENCY

Design a creative flow chart or diagram to outline the various steps to the Presidency. Be sure to include such things as Primary Election, National Convention, Nomination, Campaign, Vote, Meeting of Electors, Inaugural Ceremonies, etc. Do your diagram or flow chart in such a way that it is colorful, informative, simple, and symbolic.



COMMEMORATING POLITICS

Design a series of patriotic commemorative stamps or first day covers saluting some modern political heroes, events, policies, or decisions. Include a brief paragraph of explanation justifying each subject chosen.

WRITE YOUR CONGRESSMAN

Write a personal letter to one of your state Senators or Representatives asking him/her some questions about a concern you have as a junior citizen. Be specific in both your comments and questions.

HOW THE POLLSTERS CALL IT

The taking of a poll is a way to gather information on how people feel about a subject. Run a poll in your school making certain to get a cross section of the school population according to sex, race, grade, etc. Choose a topic such as:

"Do you favor a four-day school week?"

"Do you feel there should be year-round school?"

"Could computers effectively take the place of teachers?"

"Are schools keeping pace with the times?"

PREJUDICE AND PRESIDENCY

Research the background of any ten past Presidents in terms of their education, religion, age when elected, ethnic heritage, military service, careers/occupations, marital status, and political party membership. Set the results of your research up in chart form. What conclusions can you draw about the type of person who is most likely to be elected President?

YOUR VOTE . . . IT DOES COUNT

DID YOU KNOW . . .

The Presidential election was won in 1960 by less than one vote per precinct out of a total of over 69 million votes; in 1968 by less than three votes per precinct out of 73 million cast.

Design a poster to promote this idea.

NEW RIGHTS FOR AMERICANS

Pretend you are a candidate running for a national office. Choose one of the following topics as the basis for your campaign and write a short two minute speech to sell the public on your idea.

RIGHT TO:

Leisure
Truth
To Be Unique
Peace
Health
Beauty
Privacy
Have a Job

IF I WERE RUNNING FOR OFFICE . . .

Suppose you were running for an office in some club, organization, or group in your school. Design a complete campaign for getting yourself elected including a handbill, school newspaper ad, PA announcement, campaign button or patch, slogan, and some type of personal speech.

WHAT ABOUT A SIX YEAR TERM?

Consider the arguments outlined below and write an editorial for your school newspaper on the subject. Do some research and interviewing first.

* * *

A one-term President wouldn't have to spend any of his time in office campaigning for re-election. He could give all his time to the problems of the nation.

A one-term President could do what he thought ought to be done without worrying about whether it cost him votes. If, for example, he thought the nation needed more tax money, he could ask for a tax rise even though this action made him unpopular.

With a six-year term, a President would have two more years to carry out his programs. Four years is not always long enough to get programs passed by Congress and put into operation.

Finally, a six-year limit on a President's time in office would lessen the danger to the nation of having a leader who becomes exhausted in mind and body. Six years is long enough, some Americans think, for a person to bear the burdens of the highest office.

* * *

A President who didn't have to worry about getting re-elected might just goof off and enjoy himself instead of tending to business.

A one-term President might feel no pressure from the voters to follow their wishes. He might use the great powers of his office to do things that the voters didn't approve of.

Six years would be too long for the nation to be stuck with a President who was doing a poor job. On the other hand, six years might not be long enough for a President who was doing a good job.

Finally, a one-term President might have less influence with foreign leaders. These leaders might not want to work out agreements with such a President. They would know that in six years they would have to deal with a new U.S. President who might have different ideas.

WHO REALLY ELECTS A PRESIDENT?

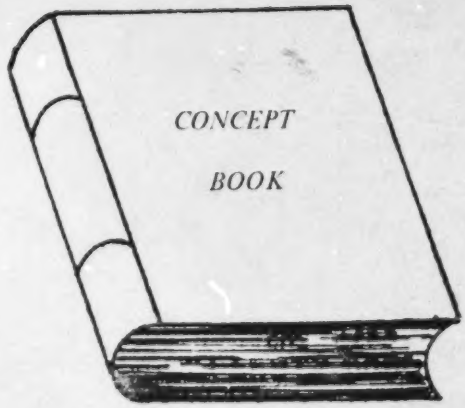
Find out all you can about the Electoral College. What is it? What does it do? How many electors are there? What determines the number? Write your findings up in paragraph form. Then decide what key states you would want to concentrate on in a campaign for President. Outline a good strategy for setting up an effective campaign in these states.

HOLD YOUR OWN MOCK ELECTION

Help your teacher set up a mock classroom election for class officers. Try to include all aspects of a Presidential election in your plans including a Primary, a National Convention, a Campaign, A Vote, and a Swearing In Ceremony.

MAKE A PERSONAL CONCEPT BOOK

Make a concept book on the topic of elections, citizenship, government, patriotism, or voting. Your book should include a list of specific words or terms related to that concept along with dictionary definitions, personal comments or interpretations of words, famous quotes on the idea/terms, and anything else you care to put down.



MAPPING AN EFFECTIVE CAMPAIGN

Get a map of the United States and plot an ideal Presidential campaign trip if you were indeed trying to hit only the key states in terms of the Electoral College. Draw lines on the map from one spot to the next. What cities or states would you visit? How much time would you spend in each place? What kinds of things would you do or talk about in each area? Write out a complete itinerary for your campaign.

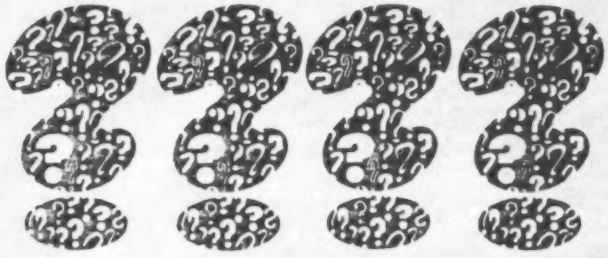
THE POOR VOTER ON ELECTION DAY

The proudest now is but my peer,
The highest not more high;
Today, of all the weary year,
A king of men am I.
Today alike are great and small,
The nameless and the known;
My palace is the people's hall,
The ballot box my throne!

Who serves today upon the list,
Beside the served shall stand;
Alike the brown and wrinkled fist,
The gloved and dainty hand!
The rich is level with the poor,
The weak is strong today;
And sleekest broadcloth counts no more
Than homespun frock of gray.

Today shall simple manhood try
The strength of gold and land;
The wide world has not wealth to buy
The power in my right hand!

1. What kind of man do you think is speaking the lines of the poem?
2. What is his opinion of the right to vote?
3. What is your opinion of this person's attitude toward voting?



DESIGN A JUNIOR CITIZENS' CONTEST

Work with a group and design a contest for junior citizens in your school or community. What is the purpose of the contest? Who can enter? What activity do entries have to complete? When is the deadline? What is the ultimate goal? How will you promote it?

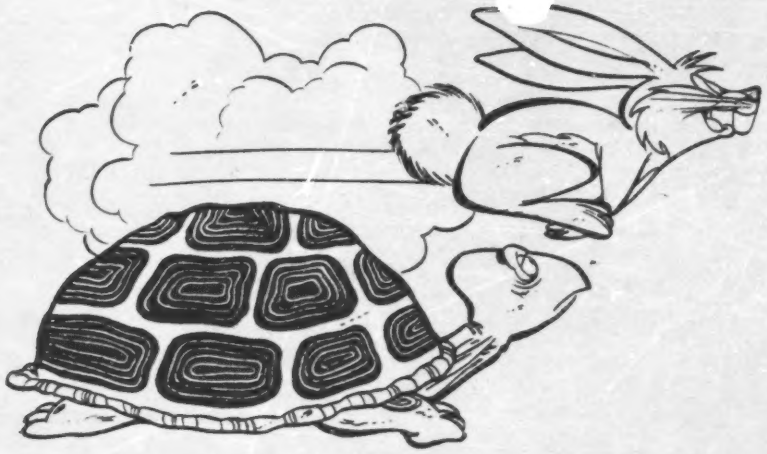
FADS AND FASHIONS STIR UP VOTERS

In any big election year, retailers do all kinds of things to help get out the vote - - - - red/white/blue store decorations and displays, free give-aways such as VOTE balloons or banners, and sale of gimmick clothing with star-spangled jackets, hats or jeans. Pretend you are a department store owner and outline a plan for your place of business to stir up the voters. Include drawings and explanations in detail of what you plan to do.

THERE'S TWO SIDES TO EVERY STORY

Brainstorm with a group of friends and list as many good and bad consequences as you can think of regarding each of the following situations:

A Minority President
A Woman President
Impeachment as a Common Procedure
Votes Controlled by Senior Citizens
Votes Controlled by Junior Citizens



MAKE A GLOSSARY OF POLITICAL TERMS

Make a glossary of election and political terms which you know and have come to understand. Set it up in poster or booklet form. Add newspaper clippings, ads, or drawings wherever possible to add information about the meaning of the terms.

HOW WELL INFORMED IS JOHN Q. PUBLIC?

Prepare a simple quiz of True/False, Fill-In-Blanks, or Multiple Choice questions on the topic of Elections, Politics, or the Presidency. Give it to a group of people including students, teachers, parents, and citizens of the community. How informed are people in general? Which group is most informed? Least informed? What suggestions could you make to help the situation?

CARTOONISTS LOOK AT CANDIDATES/ISSUES

Newspapers and magazines have many cartoons about candidates and issues during an election year. Collect these and use as a basis for designing a humorous Candidate/Issues Booklet of Facts and Fiction.

WHAT TYPE OF PERSON SHOULD THE PRESIDENT BE?

Interview at least ten people of all ages to answer this question.
Use the results to write an essay on the topic.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE PRESIDENT ANYWAY?

Research to find out all you can about the office of the Presidency. Use this information as the basis for developing an informative booklet with a cartoon format that could be used with people in your community.

WOULD YOU RATHER BE A DONKEY OR AN ELEPHANT?

The U.S. has two major political parties - - - - Democrats and Republicans. Each party has some basic differences. Research to find out what these differences are in terms of:

National Symbols Used
Current Number in House and Senate
Today's Key Leaders
Basic Philosophy
Type of Person Party Tends to Attract

Now . . . invent a third party of your own explaining how your party differs from the two just discussed.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE GREAT AMERICAN POLITICAL HERO

Who do we know in politics today that is admired in the same way that Ben Franklin or Teddy Roosevelt, or John F. Kennedy were? Get together with friends and try to come up with the qualities of a NOW hero and use these as a basis for creating the "political hero of today". Describe your hero - - - - age, background, personal appearance, political experiences, philosophies, and stand on key issues.